

If you don't understand why one teaching method is considered more effective than another, ask your child's teacher or principal for an explanation. If you disagree with something, make your views known. But please remember to be receptive to the other person's point of view as well.

In this way, by remaining open to alternatives and each other's ideas, we all win: the children, the school, the community. Let's get together and start working on it today. Your child's success and the success of our entire educational system depend on this important alliance: parents and teachers working together.

This brochure was developed in co-operation with the Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, which, for the past 60 years, has played a leading role in fostering better communication between parents and educators.

For further information, contact the following organizations:

Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations  
Suite 750, 252 Bloor Street West  
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Tel.: (416) 924-7491

Federation of Catholic Parent-Teacher Associations of Ontario, 5630 Dorchester Road  
Niagara Falls, Ontario, L2G 5S3  
Tel.: (416) 356-6173

L'Association des parents et instituteurs  
Suite 206, 260 Dalhousie Street  
Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 7E4  
Tel.: (613) 235-4321

Central Ontario (491-0330)  
Suite 320, Heron's Hill Building  
2025 Sheppard Avenue East  
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Eastern Ontario (546-2641)  
Suite 301  
1055 Princess Street  
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Ottawa Valley (225-2230)  
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Northwestern Ontario (457-1581)  
435 James Street South  
Thunder Bay  
P7E 6E3

Midnorthern Ontario (566-3480)  
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Sudbury  
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Northeastern Ontario (474-7210)  
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Western Ontario (472-1440)  
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Midwestern Ontario (885-0440)  
279 Weber Street North  
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Niagara (684-1123)  
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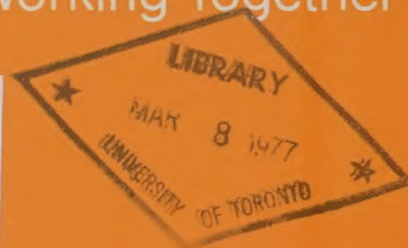


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## Parents and Teachers Working Together



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The home and the school. Parents and teachers.

Children learn a great deal in both places and from both groups of people. Yet all too often, parents seem reluctant to contact the school, to get to know the principal and teachers.

Parents and teachers are such close partners in the development of a child that neither group should wait for an invitation before approaching the other.

Of course, as a parent you probably visit the school when there's an open house or when you're asked to come in by a teacher to discuss a problem. Such visits are helpful, but they may be too infrequent or too brief to give you – or the teachers – the kind of opportunity you need for meaningful discussion.

For instance, there must be times when *you* would like to take the initiative and set up an appointment to see the teacher: you might have a question about the school program or might be worried about your child's progress in a specific area. Well, don't hesitate and don't wait for that "appropriate opportunity" to drift your way: call up the principal or the teacher concerned and set up a meeting at a time that's convenient to you both. Remember, you don't have to wait for an invitation; you're welcome in your school and you have a right to know what is happening there.

It might be encouraging for you to know that the principal and teachers not only welcome direct contact with the parents of their students, they also stand to gain important advantages from talking with you. From *your* point of view, a visit to the school can be an opportunity to set your mind at rest and get some answers to those unanswered questions you've been storing up; from the *teacher's* point of view, your visit is an opportunity to get guidance on how best to work with your child in the classroom.

As a parent, you obviously *care* about your child's education. And you probably do what you can to help at home. But, in some cases, working with your son or daughter on math lessons or a spelling assignment may not really be enough. After all, your child's whole future is at stake.

And there *is* a much more important task you can perform – one that is both simple and yet vitally important, and one that you alone are truly qualified to undertake. Very simply, call up the principal and offer your services as an authority on your child.

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Paradoxically, this suggestion is so simple as to require elaboration. The focal point of education in Ontario is the *individual child*. The purpose of our educational system is to provide every child with the opportunity to develop as completely as possible in the direction of his/her particular talents and needs. It follows that – since *you* know your child and his/her aspirations better than any teacher or principal could – the best contribution you can make to his/her formal education is to establish a close and comfortable contact with the teachers and principal at the school.

Moreover, as a parent, as a taxpayer, you have both a right and a responsibility to share in the planning of your child's education and in determining how his/her individual needs are met. From your child's point of view, the sight of mom and dad speaking to the teacher inspires a feeling of confidence and security, providing the kind of reassurance that reinforces motivation. You see, it is important for your child to know that the people who are close to him and whose judgement he most respects get along and work together. You alone can give him this satisfaction by getting in touch with the school.

Another excellent way to participate in the educational process is to become an active member of a parent-teacher group in your community. The Ontario Federation of Home and School Associations, the Federation of Catholic Parent-Teacher Associations of Ontario, and *L'Association des parents et instituteurs* are the major organizations in Ontario actively promoting your involvement in school affairs.

At their meetings, you'll encounter people from all walks of life who are interested in improving the quality of education in your community. If you're reluctant to become involved because you think you may not "fit in", give yourself the benefit of the doubt and you'll find out that most of the people who belong to these organizations aren't experts in the field of education. They're simply concerned people – parents and teachers who realize that a team approach to educational planning and problem-solving can work wonders.

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In all cases, the process begins with dialogue. It's vitally important that educators communicate the philosophy behind new teaching methods and classroom procedures to parents; it's equally important that parents communicate their concerns and insights to educators. But this kind of dialogue is only effective when both sides participate actively. Your local home-and-school or parent-teacher association meeting is one forum where you can feel free to ask questions and make your views known.

### **There are other ways, too**

Your involvement with the educational system needn't be as formal as membership in a parent-teacher organization, however. In many schools, parents are welcomed as volunteers. Time permitting, you might wish to help teachers in the classroom or work part-time in the school library. Perhaps you could be of assistance on field trips, or in supervising various after-hours activities. Maybe you have a special talent or skill to contribute. If so, don't hesitate to offer your services. Naturally, since the school is a place where you expect a certain level of professionalism and expertise, there have to be some policies regarding what the parent volunteer can and cannot do; but generally, you'll find that schools welcome the assistance of interested parents.

Another excellent way of becoming involved is to attend your local school-board meetings. They're generally open to the public, and can give you a good general picture of what's going on in your community's schools. Parents can often influence the outcome of a board's deliberations by presenting a well-prepared brief on the topic under discussion, or by serving on a school-board advisory committee studying a particular issue. After all, school trustees need and want the support of the public, and usually appreciate knowing whether their decisions accurately reflect the views of the people who elect them.

### **If you have a question, ask**

Not all schools and not all teachers have as yet developed open lines of communication with parents. But don't let that intimidate you: if you have a question about the curriculum or are concerned about your child's progress, get in touch.